

City Aide Defends Housing Inspection Plan

(Editor's Note: Torrance voters will be asked at the April 9 municipal election to determine whether the city's Uniform Housing Code should be repealed. The measure was placed on the ballot after Active Citizens of Torrance gathered signatures of some 15 per cent of the city's registered voters. This is the last in a series of articles which the Press-Herald has published on this subject.)

By NATALIE HALL
Press-Herald Staff Writer
The controversy over the Uniform Housing Code opened

up again this week as Torrance's assistant city manager vigorously denied that residents of North Torrance had been harassed during housing inspections.

He was responding to recent comments by Mrs. Carmen Rivera, spokesman for Active Citizens of Torrance, whose group seeks to abolish the Uniform Housing Code in this community in favor of the state code.

Assistant City Manager Jerome I. Scharfman countered charges by saying, "If there's an evidence of harassment, we'll be glad to take whatever action is necessary."

The systematic, door-to-

door enforcement of housing code regulations has been necessary in Torrance to qualify the city for urban renewal funds, another target of the Active Citizens of Torrance (ACT).

Scharfman added that the two-man inspection team—consisting of one building inspector and one fire prevention official in uniform—has been specially trained to "go about these inspections in a helpful way."

Usually, Scharfman said, people welcome the inspectors, who are sometimes able to give money-saving tips to the homeowner. The inspectors look for dangerous conditions, such as unvented heat-

ers, and point out the need for basic repairs which might prove very costly if left unattended for too long, Scharfman added.

In no case, Scharfman said, is any homeowner forced to admit the inspection team. Inspectors must be invited in.

"The people who want this housing law out," Scharfman remarked, "may be just the ones who will want an eyesore removed from their neighborhood next year."

Scharfman explained that the federal government grants millions to improve cities by rehabilitating run-down areas. In return, he said, the government requires the cities to take steps to

keep decent neighborhoods from becoming blighted so it won't have to grant more money in the future.

When Congress passed its urban renewal law, it stipulated that a municipality must have a workable program of housing code enforcement in order to be eligible for renewal funds. Scharfman added that Congress expressed its preference for the Uniform Housing Code because it afforded the most local control to the individual community.

However, California is one of the handful of states which has a state housing code, similar to the Uniform Housing Code. If the voters reject the

local code, Scharfman said, building officials will automatically begin to enforce the state code. Torrance will still be eligible then for urban renewal funds.

Scharfman pointed out that the only real effect of abolishing Uniform Housing Code would be to take away local control of housing laws. As things stand now, the Torrance City Council may make revisions in the local code to suit the needs of this community.

Furthermore, Scharfman said, the local five-man Housing Advisory Board, which now hears citizen complaints about inspectors' decisions, would be abolished. All ap-

peals would have to be sent to Sacramento.

Scharfman also denied ACT charges that the housing code is a retroactive law, requiring owners of old houses to bring them up to stringent housing code tenets.

"A house must simply be safe and sanitary according to standards under which it was built," Scharfman stated.

ACT's contention that people in the Meadow Park Redevelopment Project were "bullied" into selling their property also came under fire from Scharfman. Residents of the project area asked for urban renewal, Scharfman said, because they felt it (See CODE, Page A-4)

TO CALL US

Circulation OfficeDA 5-1515
AdvertisingDA 5-6060
Women's NewsDA 5-6380
News DepartmentDA 5-6060

Torrance

Press-Herald

Published semi-weekly Wednesday and Sunday by King Williams Press, Inc. Entered as second class matter January 30, 1914, at Post Office, Torrance, California, Under act of March 3, 1879.

INSIDE TODAY

Ann LandersC-1 RestaurantsC-10
EditorialsC-2 SportsD-1
ObituariesA-4 Women's NewsB-1
ProfileC-1 Want AdsD-3

Series II, Volume IV, Number 72

★ ★

3238 Sepulveda Blvd., Torrance, California—Wednesday, March 6, 1968

By Carrier 50c Per Month
By Mail, \$18 Per Year

10c Per Copy 66 PAGES

45-Cent Bus Fare Can End Deficit

O'BRIEN TRIAL

Jury Deliberating Fate of Murderer

By HENRY BURKE
Press-Herald Staff Writer

The jury deciding punishment for convicted murderer Jerry Lee O'Brien at Superior Court in Torrance was instructed by Judge Burch Donahue yesterday to render a decision of life imprisonment or execution.

Jury deliberation began at 2 p.m. for the seven men and five women. They were taken to dinner shortly after 4:15 p.m. and put up in a hotel during the night.

Deputy District Attorney Robert Burnett and Public Defender Bud Calof argued the penalty phase of the trial for more than two hours before submitting the case to the court.

THE JURY found O'Brien guilty Feb. 21 of the Aug. 10

Plan for Del Amo Sought

The Torrance City Council has asked the Planning Commission to come up with a specific recommendation for a Del Amo Center master plan.

The vote, 6-1, came after City Councilman David K. Lyman presented a lengthy statement calling for development of the area.

Lyman pointed out that the financial center had added a "whole new dimension" to the city of Torrance, stating that the city has an obligation to "the people who make an investment such as we see in the financial center."

HE RECOMMENDED that plans be made for the handling of utilities, landscaping, and highways within the Del Amo area, noting that the vicinity could become another Century City-type complex.

Sole dissenting vote was cast by Mayor Albert Isen, who implied that the presentation had something to do with Lyman's bid for reelection. Any such proposal should be taken up after the April 9 municipal balloting, Isen said.

killings of Torrance Police Officer David N. Seibert in a market holdup.

An account of the shooting was given from the witness stand Monday by Dr. Ruth Jens, a neuropsychiatrist, who made a study of the defendant.

She blamed the murder of Officer Seibert on an incident in 1960 when O'Brien, riding with a companion, was stopped by a policeman near Tampa Street and Ventura Boulevard.

O'Brien, according to testimony, attempted to run away from the officer for fear of his capture for possession of narcotics, a parole violation.

WHEN OFFICER Robert Stevens cornered the suspect, he struck O'Brien behind the neck and the policeman's gun discharged in the process.

The bullet struck the left side of the neck and shoulder and punctured O'Brien's right lung.

The victim was taken to a hospital in Northridge and was given the last rites of the Roman Catholic Church. He was confined there for two weeks before being jailed.

Dr. Jens said O'Brien developed a pavlovian response from the incident, quoting O'Brien as saying, "I had never thought of the use of a gun until that cop shot me in '60."

SHE SAID, "Humans respond to a repeated stimulus and when apprehended by Officer Seibert, O'Brien automatically shot him."

The doctor's testimony was presented in conglomeration with a background of conflict

tracing the defendant to his childhood.

The picture of a family abandoned by a father of two (See O'BRIEN, Page A-2)

Photo Plan Adopted by Trustees

The Torrance Board of Education voted 4-1 Monday to award Thompson Photography a contract to take student pictures in the elementary schools.

Five plans were proposed and five firms submitted bids. Plan A was adopted. Thompson will make arrangements with each school principal.

The program is a service for the parents and no profits will be realized by the district.

A NOTICE of the event will be mailed home. A charge of \$2.35 will be collected after the pictures are received four weeks following photo day. Envelopes will be provided to pay for the pictures or they may be returned.

It was estimated 10 minutes would be taken from class time for the project.

PARENTS ARE to be provided with an assortment of souvenir wallet and classroom photographs.

Board President Bert Lynn opposed the program. He said a potential \$80,000 item is involved and he could not justify draining this amount of money from the pocket book.



INTERNATIONAL BENEFIT . . . Dr. John A. Lucas, principal of South High School, points out an area of the South High campus which will become the site of an international carnival March 15, 16, and 17, to Mrs. Otto Willett. She is serving as advisor and general chairman for the community wide event. Titled "Operation Nepal," the carnival will benefit a high school in Nepal. In the background are (from left) Lynn Curtis, 18, general chairman; Joan Brogdon, 16, of the Girls' Athletic Association; and Dave Feinberg, finance chairman. (Press-Herald Photo)

South High to Aid Students in Nepal

Students at South High School this week are finalizing plans for one of the most ambitious charitable activities ever sponsored by high school students in the nation.

Goal of the festival is to raise funds for Azad High School, a small school in the town of Banepa, Nepal, at the base of Mount Everest. Funds will be used for the purchase of school materials and equipment, furniture, and other items needed for the educational program at the small high school.

Chairman of the festival is Lynn Curtis, former South High student president, who first conceived the idea. Mrs. Otto B. Willett, wife of the late South Bay Municipal Court judge, is serving as advisor. She is being assisted by Mrs. Joan Burdette and Mrs. Edie Larson.

OTHER student chairmen are Jim Antal, co-chairman; Bill Cohen, coordinating chairman; Robin Stillwell, entertainment; Glenn Janssen, equipment; Dave Feinberg, finances; Nancy Mock, art; Lauri Sochat, publicity; Marie Crispin, secretary; Bob Saunders, security; Chris Mock, plot planning; and Dave Rink, power and communications.

"Operation Nepal—An International Festival of Fellowship" is scheduled Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, March 15, 16, and 17, on the Spartan campus.

The festival is the result of a visit to South High—and other Torrance schools—by Ram E. K. Shrestha, headmaster of Azad High School, in January, 1967. Shrestha's dedication to improve his country's educational programs led South High students to explore ways of helping him achieve that goal.

"Operation Nepal" is the result of that visit. The festival was planned in cooperation with the Peace Corps, the

United Nations, the United States State Department, and the Nepalese government. South High has been assured that funds sent to Nepal will be used only by Azad High School.

An amusement company will set up a carnival midway (See NEPAL, Page A-2)

Merger of School, City Bus Systems Not Recommended

City bus fares would have to be raised from 25 cents to 45 cents in order to cancel the bus system's \$100,000 per year deficit, City Councilmen learned last night.

In response to a request from Councilman Ed Talbert, city finance officials prepared a detailed statement spelling out the realities of bus system money troubles.

In addition to raising the basic bus fare by 20 cents, the municipal bus lines would have to increase the hourly charter rate from \$7.50 to \$8, and discontinue the 10 percent discount on commutation books.

"THESE CHANGES in the fare structure would raise an estimated \$103,000 in additional revenue," the report read. "This calculation includes an estimated 20 percent loss in passengers as a result of the fare increase."

Finance Director W. W. Dunmore also answered inquiries from Councilman Ross Sciarrotta, who had previously asked why the city's rolling stock was to be sold to the Rapid Transit District for \$110,000. Sciarrotta said he had uncovered figures revealing that the buses and equipment were actually worth \$290,000.

DUNDORE SAID in his report that the figure \$290,000 represented the original cost of the buses, noting that the

book value of the stock was actually less than \$65,000. Parts inventory has depreciated to \$15,000, Dundore said, noting that RTD is willing to take it all off the city's hands for \$110,000.

City Councilmen were also presented with a report from city officials who had been studying the possibility of a merger between the city and school bus systems.

The report concluded that such a merger would not be advisable. The peak hours for both systems are the morning and evening rushes, the report said.

Furthermore, the two systems require different types of buses which are not suitable for each other's purposes.

COUNCILMEN tentatively selected a site for the new Southeast Torrance Branch Library at last night's session. The site, owned by the Torrance Unified School District, is located on the northeast corner of Arlington Avenue and 233rd Street.

The council voted to negotiate a joint appraisal of the property in order to proceed with purchase arrangements.

Reconvening as the city's Redevelopment Agency, Councilmen accepted a bid from Dakeno, Inc., Demolition Contractor, of San Gabriel, for the removal of vacated structures in the city's urban redevelopment area.

Dump Hearing Set Tonight

The first public hearing on a proposal to develop a rubbish dump in the Walteria area is scheduled at 7 p.m. this evening before the city's Planning Commission. Proponents want to develop a sand and gravel pit as a cut-and-fill rubbish dump. The proposal is opposed by residents of the South Torrance area and was defeated by the City Council Feb. 28, 1967, after several months of hearings.

Court Hearing Ordered

A male nurse accused of taking some \$2,000 in stocks from his employer has been ordered to appear in Superior Court March 18 to answer charges of grand theft. Clyde B. Cockerill, 43, of Long Beach, is accused of taking the stock from Mrs. Margaret Leddy of 2550 Pacific Coast Hwy. Cockerill is free on \$1,250 bail.

Library Change Delayed

Plans for the city to take over operation of the first library here have been delayed about three weeks to permit civil service examinations. The city was scheduled to take over the operation of the Isabel Henderson Library, 4805 Emerald St., next Monday. City councilmen, however, refused to waive civil service exams for county library employees who wish to join the new municipal system and the change has been postponed to March 28. Actual operation of the Henderson branch by city employees is expected to begin April 8. It was not announced if the library would remain open between March 28 and April 8.

Botanic Gardens Slate Arbor Day Ceremonies

Arbor Day will be celebrated at South Coast Botanic Garden Saturday at 10 a.m. with the traditional giving of seedling trees to all children who come to the garden accompanied by an adult. The trees are Incense Cedar which are California natives.

The Arbor Day program is sponsored by South Coast Botanic Garden Foundation and mistress of ceremonies will be the Foundation's founder-president, Mrs. Frances Young. Helping as master of ceremonies will be Ove Hoyler, vice president, and junior

master of ceremonies Scott Garden Club, under Mrs. Darhl Davis, will present a redwood tree to the garden purchased with money they won in California State Garden Club competition. The Silver Bells will be assisted in planting the redwood tree by Palos Verdes Peninsula 4-H Club members and Takao Niya, educational assistant for the children's section of the garden.

Additional redwood trees to complete a planned grove of 30 trees for the children's garden will be presented by (See TREES, Page A-4)

SILVER BELLS, junior members of the Silver Spur